[Sally.exe: _OVERTHROW_]

[INTRODUCTION]

The world of today has become one where its inhabitants have fallen as completely dependent victims of the intricate, complex universe of technology. We are driven to it, connected to it, and unaware of the dangers lurking within it. As useful as it may be in countless situations, we fail to realize that, eventually, this may lead to our very downfall.

x x x

Alternate Universes were proven infinite by generations of scientific and mathematical geniuses ahead of our current time. If these universes were to blend in with one another, they stated, then disaster would be inevitable. It was unknown just what kind of damage could be done exactly- but the calculations only proved that it simply could not be miniscule. Apart from the scientists, anyone- or, any*thing*- who was able to possess such knowledge, would be able to gain absolute power. This was a worst-case scenario that was always stressed throughout various facilities. Data was to be stored away and firmly secured, all conferences were to be held in a room surrounded by sound-proof walls; every bit of information was to be collected and kept in total privacy.

But even the most elaborate of security systems could be broken with the right tactics.

x x x

One universe, which was not otherwise acknowledged by humans of its existence, had anthropomorphic animals as its inhabitants. They were living ‘fictional’ characters from the Sonic the Hedgehog series, to be exact. This was because every human-created figment had its own reality- but this notion was not one that could be taken seriously by scientific professionals, as they interpreted the alternate universes as things that were only comprised of materialistic, physical things that already existed on Earth. And, sadly, it was an expected hypothesis to be made from folk who found their own species superior to all others.

These peculiar characters lived in a planet by the name of Mobius, and a majority of them were gifted with powers of various kinds, as well. Speed, flight, strength- the possibilities were virtually endless, although reasonable.

The anthros also had a common enemy named Doctor Ivo Robotnik, who was, in fact, a human from Earth. His IQ level was 300- and with an IQ as high as this, Robotnik was able to construct devices which functioned beyond average human understanding. With one of these devices he was able to transport himself to this planet and back to his own within the blink of an eye. The rest were used to destroy Sonic the Hedgehog, the supposed leader of Mobius, so that he instead may take over the land.

This man's knowledge of alternate Universes was existent due to working with the scientists. Robotnik was once a part of their alliance; he conducted research and experiments with them, before his mindset altered into something horrendously selfish. His desire was to jump over the barriers of what was considered 'logical' scientific thinking- he wanted to explore the ultimate reaches of science that no other man would dare to, take seriously what no other man would dare to- and he wanted to conquer what no other man would dare to.

One device that was used to transfer Robotnik to different universes ultimately led the man to his demise. Nobody in Mobius seemed to know what the cause of the nemesis' disappearance was, however. They all found it strange that merely days ago he was constructing a new combat-talented robot, and now, his activity had been unexpectedly shut down.

[MEANWHILE]

In the heart of a separate universe was Planet Mobius_ALT. This terrene was inhabited by folk similar to those on Mobius-- yet the land itself was exactly the polar opposite of its counterpart. The civilians of this earth, titled the 'e-x-es,' were otherwise known as 'executioners.' They were driven by the hellish Tyrant, Sonic.exe, and this unsightly dictator of a Hedgehog ruled for decades with an iron claw and kept an insatiable hunger for bloodshed. He transformed the land from an exact replica of the original into something absolutely hideous; its appearance only grew worse, however, after a great war had broken out between Mobius and Mobius_ALT. What was once seen as a hellish landscape, became a barren wasteland. Not even a single tumbleweed could be spotted, as everything was annihilated. The exes had lost. Their rulers were left without any subjects. All that did remain was their pitiful excuse of a castle, having broken down significantly.

By Sonic.exe's side was the royal Queen of Dismemberment, Sally_Alicia_Acorn.exe, who claimed to love her husband despite the fact that he had brutally gouged out her eyes and

sewn the lids shut. This eerily beautiful chipmunk acted as if she had been brainwashed by him- as if she had been under a trance- and always did his bidding without an ounce of hesitation, never failing to disembowel others with a nice big grin. Before the war had begun, the other exes, for hundreds of years, were busy living the lives of turmoil-drenched slaves under the rule of the blue, satanic hedgehog. Sonic.exe gave no mercy whatsoever, regardless of how much his exhausted workers cried and begged and pleaded for some rest.

Unfortunately, over time, Sonic.exe had began to mistreat his once-beloved Queen. She was no longer a lover to him, but instead a sentient object. This caused the pessimistic part of Sally's mind to unravel and battle with the optimistic, irregularly joyful side; her love for Sonic.exe repeatedly roused and diminished time and time again, as a result.

Does he need me? Yes he does! I am his everything! She would ponder.
No, he does not. I am worthless in his eyes.

This conflict between both of Sally's consciences- her normal conscience, and the brainwashed one- was overwhelming, consistent, and daily. It soon enough went to the point where the gruesome Queen had chosen to listen to one side: The one which whispered bitterly that Sonic.exe did not love her.

The final snapping point had been reached.

When the carnivorous king least expected it, his ex-lover had plotted an ambush. Sally had summoned for a pit of monstrous, black, thorny vines to rise up from the dusty terrain and constrict the ruthless Hedgehog's limbs. "Sally Acorn!" roared the menacing beast of a king. "Why do you dishonor your *husband?* Unhand me from this *thing!"*

The alternate Sonic continued to struggle in the grasp of the overgrown autotroph while his Queen merely stood and observed the situation with her auditory senses.

The Chipmunk answered, "You are no husband of mine."

With an upward motion of her claw, the new, righteous ruler commenced for its freshly beckoned plant to drain its victim of his power. It proceeded to do so and left the Hedgehog a writhing mess of agony during the process. All of the energy had then transferred from the vines and unto the Queen; waves of dark violet had coursed its way via the sentient herb through pulses, and traveled into Sally.exe's very core. She was now fitted with double the power, double the strength, and double the authority. The Queen released Sonic.exe from the plant-like monster and towered over his newly weakened carcass.

“What a pathetic waste of my time,” scoffed Sally. “You should not have reigned over any bit of land in the first place.”

She finished the former king off with a sharp stomp to his pitiful head and cracked a wide smirk upon hearing the skull inside fracture.

“Long live the Queen.”

[A FRESH START]

This early morning was nothing short of ordinary in Green Hill Zone: the sunlight was lukewarm and crisp with the sunrise, the breeze soft and soothing, and the little animals were hopping and playing about. Sonic was busy wasting away the day by laying in the short, checker-patterned grass and resting his eyes after a near-sleepless night. The poor Hedgehog had a fairly concerning case of insomnia that nobody really knew about, except for one friend, whom he felt safe enough around to share that secret with, so Sonic hoped he’d be able to sleep now before anyone else would wake in the later hours just to find him and say hello.

That one friend in particular came ‘round with utter silence as to not disturb the blue hero, and calmly sat beside him. He went by the name of *Miles ‘Tails’ Prower*- and he was a very small fox with a very big heart.

The little fox, at the age of eight, had an IQ almost as high as the aforementioned Doctor Robotnik. Miles spent a majority of his time constructing robots and gadgets and vehicles and other miscellaneous thingamabobs, and used them to help Sonic fight the mad scientist. His anatomical structure was also most bizarre-- he had two tails instead of one-- along with the ability to conduct flight by rotating them as if they were a helicopter propeller. But even at his young age, Tails was incredibly fond of adventure and would do anything to protect his friends, whom he undoubtedly considered as his family. This led the yellow fox pup to become a very important member in Sonic’s group of allies.

“Hey, Tails,” greeted Sonic in a quiescent tone. Clearly he hadn’t been able to fall asleep just yet, even in the tranquil surroundings.

Tails’ eyes widened a little bit in a guilty expression, “Sorry to wake you!”

The apology was dismissed with a soft smile and a wave of a gloved hand.
“No worries, pal. I wasn’t even close to drifting off yet.”

A golden butterfly glided and fluttered past the two Mobians during the ensuing silence and gently landed upon a lime green leaf. The flowers which bloomed from the plant itself were absolutely gorgeous; their petals were coated in fresh dewdrops, and the nectar inside it was sweet as the sun’s glory.

This world was teeming with life and utter beauty . . .

Yet it had been rudely interrupted- sounding in the distance was an astonishing, thunderous rumble.

[THE BEGINNING OF THE END]

“What was that?” exclaimed Tails. Generally he was afraid of loud noises, and this caused the poor fox to shiver like mad. Quickly he stood up from the short-cut grass and watched as the hedgehog did the same. Sonic scratched the inside of his left ear with his pinkie finger as both eyes scanned the surroundings to find any abnormalities in the distance. He then shrugged, and quirked a brow upon sighting nothing harmful. Simply, the hedgehog muttered, “I’ve no idea.”

Another boisterous rumble shook the ground and sky. Miles was on the verge of tears at this point as his little body continued to tremble.

The blue hedgehog held the small fox close and cupped the back of his head with a caring hand. Again, his eyes scanned the surroundings, albeit quicker this time than he did previously.

“We gotta get outta here, Tails!” he cried out.

Immediately Sonic did what he could best-- run. But he couldn’t leave his dear friend behind; therefore, the hero grasped onto the other’s wrist and sped away from the direction in which the sounds came from. Following the earthquake-like boom came a large, pitch-black cloud of despair which spread across the gold-lit morning sky, tainting it with hopelessness and woe. A strong rush of air ensued and pushed heavily against Sonic as he dashed away with the little Prower. It was strong enough to slow the hedgehog down significantly; in fact, it forced him to slide back towards where he was trying to get away from.

The fox attempted to help by propelling the both of them forward with a little boost from his rotating tails, but even then, the effort was futile.

Tails eventually lost his grip on Sonic's hand. The cerulean hero's entire being was sucked away into the merciless sky; and when the fox thought he would come crashing down, a dark void ripped through the air and devoured his friend whole. The hedgehog had been cast away into an unknown world, and Tails became a shrouded mess of grief.

His friend was gone, but the void was not.

It was slowly closing in on itself, and Miles knew what he had to do. Impulsively grabbing the wrench from his nearby toolbelt, the fox promptly raced towards the portal, battling against the forces of the howling wind. His body raced through the void's opening. Once he reached the other side, the hole closed off entirely, leaving the two-tailed child in the new environment. Slowly did Tails stagger to his feet to dust himself off. Shifting both pupils around, the boy noticed his surroundings were indeed horrifying to the eye. The land was positively barren, with not a single bit of beauty thriving among its surface.

[A NEW WORLD]

Horrible, abhorrent creatures from the very depths of hell were scattered all around the area before Tails. They gaited along, displaying their mangled, anatomically impossible bodies. It was unfathomable how these monsters were even alive; their figures lacked any sense of life- as if they were all deceased and rotten. Were these formerly unique and identifiable Mobians? The fox stood frozen, afraid for his dear life as he observed these oddly animated atrocities roaming through the land. There were headless creatures, creatures with multiple limbs, creatures lacking certain body parts, creatures with their limbs replaced with blades and other strange tools ... the list went on and on. Miles was wide-eyed and petrified. He cautiously made his way through, attempting to find his friend- although, upon hinting the scent of fresh blood, all the monsters ceased with their wandering and instead targeted the two-tailed child. Now they were all on the hunt, and he was the prey.

The first beast to approach was a rather tall, bald-headed ex-Mobian; their figure was completely void of arms and legs, with their skin appearing as sloppily-pasted leather displaying

their ribs and emaciated form. They stood on sickly thin, arachnid-esque legs, with the bottom section of each leg being long, razor-sharp blades. Upon the stainless steel surface was a mix of blood and oil, as if the nightmarish monster had just recently gotten into a fight with another one of their kind. Black scleras stared down the young Mobian as their head tilted eerily to the side, bottom jaw lowering in a hinge-like motion to expose jagged, unkempt teeth. A low hiss rumbled from their throat, scaring the poor boy out of his wits. He let out a cry and took off running whilst spinning his tails to propel his body through the air with an incredible swiftness. However, with this following action, the other hellish beings pursued his footsteps, hot on the trail. Countless and frenzied were they.

Eventually the fox managed to escape the clutches of those terrifying, disheveled *things*. His breath was heavy and shaky, heart pounding through his ribcage with excessive anxiety. The Mobian hid behind a wall, which had thankfully not fallen apart too much in comparison to the nearby piles of bricks. Each one was coloured a dark crimson hue and appeared to be more dense than clay. What were they made out of? He suspected they might have been blocks of dried, caked blood and organ bits; although, it was certainly not fresh meat, as it emitted a scent too foul for words to describe. But Tails made a valiant attempt to ignore the inhumane odor. Simply, he was grateful that he was still intact and breathing.

Why was this universe so unpleasant and grotesque? The little fox had known of alternate universes existing, albeit he would have never expected one as monstrous as this. He figured that the alternates would be an exact replica of the original Planet Mobius, with each individual having a different story than their counterparts.

Clearly he was wrong.

The surroundings looked vast and progressively more frightening as the distance increased. The boy dared to think that perhaps there were other Zones just as horrendous as the one he was currently in; those bloodthirsty, atrocious beings must have been even more dismembered than these. That was when Tails realized that they were most likely from his universe, having had their own unique identities at some point in the past, since everything else in this one was either dead or unsalvageable. There must have been someone responsible for all of this, he pondered.

It was time for Tails to set aside his innocence and become a brave soldier. His friend needed rescuing; this was the mission life had granted him with, and he would succeed no matter what, even if it meant he would have to risk his life numerous times throughout. He would discover the perpetrator behind the creation of these restless slaves and serve this world the justice it so desperately needed and begged for. With that in mind, the little fox emerged out of

hiding and sped forwards, approaching a faraway stone tunnel, which he assumed would lead him towards the next Zone.

[NO LAUGHING MATTER]

Once Tails had entered the cavern, what awaited him were even more gruesome sights to behold: Mobian faces were plastered onto the walls of the cave, and what made things even more abominable was the fact that they were not limp. No, these unrecognizable faces were animated; they spoke, shouting cries of agony and pleads for help. But as the little fox ventured onwards, he found that they began to giggle and laugh, almost brainwashed by their fate. The whole cave was soon filled with the sound of cackling. Tails felt his body tremble in the wake of these former individuals- it was as if they were stripped of their bodies for a specific reason- as if it was known that someone would eventually arrive here.

The humidity of the cave soon became nearly unbearable. Stalagmites threatened to pierce the young child who trespassed into the cave; stalactites hovered dangerously close to the top of his head. Tails was a mess of sweat as he continued on his way, having seen various limbs and organs strewn about on the ground. A sudden faint sound of a music box played from afar- all of the previously snickering and chortling visages had grown absolutely silent; not even a whisper could be heard. Was something trying to lure the fox? Whatever the case might have been, he traveled forth, regardless of the potential threat waiting like a spider in its web.

An empty room followed a flight of stairs heading downwards. How could this be? It was exactly where the music was coming from, and it kept playing despite there being nothing in sight that might have been the source. That was when a sinister, feminine voice crept in through the darkest corner, *“Wanna see something funny?”* Every syllable lingered as it passed into the fox’s large ears, and several piano notes sounded the moment a pink leg revealed itself from the pitch-blackness. “Who are you?” Tails inquired, curious as to who- or what- might have been there; the possibility of something horrid was indeed likely. And it soon manifested itself into partial view, starting with the flash of an unsightly grin. Again, the voice repeated, *“Wanna see something funny?”*

More of the mysterious being came forth with another footstep, and now the identity was uncovered: This was Rosy the Rascal, although her appearance had changed significantly. She

seemed to look like a jester, wearing jingle bells on each end of her spikes, as well as black and white face paint, and a rather colorful set of apparel. The most revolting aspect was the fact that her limbs appeared to be made of wood, as if she were a puppet- and her head was attached, not by a neck, but by a spring, as if she were a little child's life-sized plaything. A hysteric laughter burst from the being's lungs, causing Tails to flinch. After that, the entire room began to quake. It shook with a strong ferocity; this caused a crack to form on the ground, which opened up to reveal a floor made up of xylophone keys. The music box in the background then sped up to a peculiar tempo.

With the blink of an eye, what took the Hedgehog's place was, in fact, a large, vermilion and gold painted box. Tails rubbed his eyes, positively confused. But then the box began to tilt towards him, slowly, eerily, as if it were aiming straight for him. A little song began to play:

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,
Half a pound of treacle.
That's the way the money goes...

A sharp 'POP' interrupted the tune.

"-Goes the weasel!"

The lid of the box cracked open in that very instant, releasing the vile, spring-attached puppet head of Rosy, speeding right towards the yellow fox.

A bloodcurdling screech sounded from the living toy as her open jaws prepared to clamp down onto the little boy. But instead, they were met with the end of his trusty wrench, and she immediately bounced away. The metallic spring extended outwards in the opposite direction of Miles; although, as soon as its exerted length had reached its peak, Rosy paused mid-air and changed directions during the brief moment of time she had. The pink hedgehog puppet then tried once more to wolf down the fox child, bolting towards his path. He barely survived- thankfully, however, he dodged the attack just milliseconds before she reached his organ and blood-filled torso.

Once more did the disembodied faces' incessant laughter start up, echoing throughout the cave. Were they mocking the little fox? Whatever the case might have been, it was definitely not funny; the poor boy nearly held onto death's hand as the box lifted into the air with a giant leap, with its melded devil's toy coughing up a barrage of piano keys. Tails managed to dodge several, although one particular key hit him smack in the middle of his chest, nearly

fracturing his sternum and spine upon flying back into the stone wall. All of the oxygen slipped from the boy's lungs as he wheezed and gasped, collapsing onto the ground with a sickening thud. He then grew dizzy, his vision blurred, and his senses nulled. Shakily did Miles stand onto his feet yet again. The puppet towered over him, a menacing grin threatening to open and close over his tiny body to engulf him whole. He would have to think of something quick to stop the wooden beast from accomplishing its goal.

Upon analyzing the monster before him as it wobbled to and fro impatiently, the two-tailed fox took notice of the being's mechanical structure. The self-cranking handle of the box was attached by a lever mechanism. Said mech was hidden to the eye, but Tails figured that it would be in place somewhere inside the box, considering that something would need to trigger the sudden opening of the top lid. Somehow would he need to find a way to break either the lever or the crank itself, as both functioned as a necessary component for the demented jester.

What if he were to cut the string which triggered the latch?

Miles knew exactly what needed to be done; and with that, the yellow fox promptly leapt into the air, using his tails to keep him levitated. Rosy let out a ghastly snicker and crept back inside of the box. The crank began to turn, which played the tune once again:

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,
Half a pound of treacle-

Before the song could reach its ending point, the brave little Prower hastily approached the handle, grasping onto it with his wrench. All of his might was used to turn the crank backwards. The mesmerizing tune began to play in reverse, and the box vigorously shook, as if struggling to fight back. Soon the crank let out a 'click' to signal that it had been reset. However, Tails continued to tug on the handle; he needed to break that string in half.

Another tug. Another strain. Another arduous attempt to outsmart the beast Tails was forming beads of sweat on his forehead as he kept pulling down on the crank's golden handle.

Eventually the lever mechanism broke with a sudden snap of the string which held the box lid in position. Now it was forever shut closed- there would be absolutely no way for the wicked puppet to complete its gruesome deed. The loosened crank, however, spun wildly in circles, and Miles clung on for dear life. Already was he growing dizzy; this was much worse

than any carnival ride he had been on. As the frenzied rotations finally slowed down and came to a stop, the earth shook yet again. Now the xylophone key flooring began to crumble. Tails immediately released his grip on the handle and flew away, watching with relief as the wooden demon fell to its demise in a bottomless pit.

[ELECTRIC HYDRATION]

The little yellow Mobian rumbled with the ground as an avalanche occurred. Several small boulders slid and collapsed onto what was left of the xylophone floor, leaving a massive opening in the side of the room. Was this the exit? Tails desperately hoped so while he continued forth. Unfortunately for him, however, this was only the beginning of the blasted chamber. Its appearance did change, though, as there were now various pools filled with mint-green, fluorescent waters, as well as more gnarled creatures ambling among the area. The stalagmites and stalactites appeared sharper than before, and the humidity level was off the charts. But as horrible as these conditions were, Miles would need to keep going regardless. His friend was in need of rescuing, and there was nothing that would cease him from obtaining his goals. *Absolutely nothing*.

And with that, the fox plunged into the peculiar, oddly refreshing water, and opened his eyelids to see just what barbarities would lie in his path. The creatures which dwelled in the well-lit pools appeared fishlike in appearance, albeit their faces were mangled and disproportionate in comparison to the rest of their bodies. Voracious eels and heinous squids also thrived in this territory, nearly killing Tails on impact. The eels carried with them an electric shock which was followed by an all-over searing sensation, while the squids' ink would cause the little Prower to feel nauseous, as if he were poisoned. All of the 'fish' were endowed with monstrous teeth and specially-shaped fins to improve their swimming speed. The boy swerved and dodged every attack as best he could, producing a strong force with each limb as he swam. Some of the monsters' strikes were impossible to avoid, so Miles used his wrench to teach them a lesson.

He was a coughing, sputtering mess by the time he exited the deadly lake, crawling onto the surface with countless injuries. His eyelids grew heavy- oh so heavy and baggy- ... and so his limp body grew unconscious on the surface of the rocky ground. Tails was engulfed by a strangely chilling sensation, which traveled through his veins as his soft breath gave out.

When Tails awoke, he found himself in the same spot; although, looking back, he noticed that all of the water had become a merciless shade of black. Not a single thing could be seen in the pool, and he assumed that the creatures within could not see anything either. The aching in his entire bosom stung without end- every single joint and muscle was sore beyond belief- but he had to keep going. The fox shakily stood up onto his feet despite the agony that burned his body alive, and he trudged along his way.

Miles began to feel his wounds growing less painful while the time passed. Finally, the humidity was beginning to settle down. He marched along through the vapor filled cavern, allowing the foggy steam to dry his dampened fur. Both of his tails were used as a comfortable towel; they wrapped around the little fox, keeping him snug and bringing a small, yet much needed feeling of safety as he went forth.

But all of that was about to change.

There were two electricity cords lying on the ground. Both were rather large- much larger than one would normally be. All three prongs on either cord appeared sharp-edged, which was a very peculiar sight to behold. Tails tilted his head and quirked a brow, following the cables to see where they would lead off to, and what he found was astonishing. There lay the inactive body of Bunnie Rabbot, aunt Sally's best friend, although she was quite different in appearance. Those cords were her arms! Upon further inspection, Tails noticed that her robotic legs were coated with a dark rust, as if she had remained in that spot for years and years. Both eyes were wide open, where dark scleras held onto four pupils per eye, with each one carrying golden irises around it. She seemed to have no mouth- however, there was something that indicated she did- and that was shown with two big holes on either side of her jaw, exposing all of her molars. Bunnie's corpse did not move an inch, nor did she make a sound. Tails approached her with heavy caution.

"Bunnie ... ?"

The fox felt himself shivering as he reached a hand out to gently tap her shoulder. No response was given. He lowered his head and let out a sigh, almost disappointed in the fact that her body was frozen in its place. What he would give to receive a hug- after all that terror, after all that horror... That was when a mechanical whirr started up. What was that? Miles glanced up, only to find his alternate auntie's non-blood sister staring directly at him with those hideous eyes. The holes which presented her back teeth curled upwards in a bizarre attempt to smile. Bunnie's robotic voice followed, despite her 'mouth' not moving:

"Well, howdy, Sugar," greeted the cyborg rabbit. Tails was slightly taken aback, as the tone in which she spoke was monotone, yet it still conveyed some sort of positive emotion. *"How're y'all doin' today?"* The little Prower scratched the back of his head and nervously glanced around. He replied softly, "Could be better." With this response did the robotic bunny let out a giggle.

While Rabbot kept him distracted with small talk, the electric cords began to animate, twitching occasionally as the feeling being alive became an exhilarating, all-over sensation for her. In a snakelike manner did one of the cords maneuver through the air, aiming directly for the back of Miles' head. An electric charge started up at the tip of each of the three prongs; blue sparks threatened to fry the little fox. Bunnie then went for the kill, zapping poor little Tails half to death. His body vibrated vigorously as an agonized cry slipped from his lips, feeling the searing sparks coursing through his every limb. Every muscle immediately grew tense; Miles could not move or do anything to stop the attack. That was when the voltage increased, causing the yellow fox's eyes to roll to the back of his head, his entire being utterly helpless to the cruel shocking.

Once Bunnie's cord-arm pulled away, Tails' right hand opened slightly, dropping his wrench. It crashed onto the rocky ground with a loud *clank.* His whole figure then collapsed backwards, and the world suddenly went black.

As soon as the two-tailed fox opened his eyes, his groggy mind noticed how fuzzy and blurry his surroundings were. Every sound was muffled; even the soft trickling of water was difficult to decipher. He let out a pained groan and sat up slowly, rubbing the back of his aching head. Within a few minutes did everything become clear to the eyes and ears again- although now, his environment had changed. Tails was still located in the cavern, though behind him, the area was closed off by fallen stones; there was absolutely no going back. Standing in the opposite side of the room was Bunnie Rabbot. An emotionless expression bore through the fox's eyes, causing him to grow stiff with fear. This was not the Bunnie he once knew and loved.

"Good to see you're awake, Pumpkin."

Her cable arms were king cobras; their electric sparks hissed fiercely. They raised up in the air, prongs staring down at the young fox child with remorseless intent. A wicked grin formed itself upon the rabbit's filthy countenance before she laughed in her thick southern accent, *"Y'all better make sure you're done fast enough to dodge me!"*

That was when she instantly lashed out at the little boy: both cords stretched outwards like rubber, racing towards Miles with a lightning speed. Out of sheer reflex was he able to avoid getting hit; he jumped back, and stared in horror as the two cords' prongs dug deep into the rocky ground, forming a large crack in the solid surface. The cables retracted back to their original length, and Bunnie's eyebrows furrowed in disapproval. That was when her right cable arm stretched until it 'plugged into' the ceiling of the cave; the rest of her body lifted into the air, as if attached to a grappling gun. The rabbit's other cable arm extended and began to swing in large circles. There was no way Miles could use his wrench in this situation, as it made for an excellent conductor for electricity. He would have to play by her rules- and so, he leapt whenever the cord nearly struck his side, avoiding its deadly voltage. However, it eventually did hit the poor fox, sending him flying and crashing into the adjacent wall. The stones' uneven texture felt excruciating upon Tails' back- every sharp pebble dug into his skin- and he collapsed onto the dusty ground with a grunt. By the time he glanced up, Bunnie stood before him with a corrupt smile, both arms ready to shock the very soul out of him. *"Say g'bye, Sugarplum."*

Just as Tails was ready to accept his death, a rumbling sound took place in the very room. Rabbot looked up at the ceiling, multiple pupils scanning what could have been the source... nothing. But another quake occurred- one that was much louder and heavier- before an unexpected avalanche of boulders bashed the cyborg into scrap metal and bloodied flesh. It seemed that her cable arms had disrupted the already insecure structure of the cave, and the intense slamming of Tails into the wall did not help ease the chances of that happening. The little fox needed to exit the area before he would suffer the same fate; with that, he sped off, crawling into a crevice large enough for him to fit in. He scrabbled forth, soon discovering an exit which led him outside of the cave. Sweet, sweet freedom!

[SCATTERED BONES]

The morning had fallen during the time that Tails had been in the cave. Now the world was covered with blackened clouds which swirled in the forlorn sky, and not a single star was in sight. Grainy soil crackled underneath Miles' sneakers as he kept on going. There was the sight of gravestones in the distance, something utterly disturbing, as the fox noticed that many of them were labeled with the names of friends he had made in the past that nobody seemed to really remember anymore: Mighty the Armadillo, Bean the Duck, Honey the Cat,

Ray the Flying Squirrel, Nack the Weasel, and many others. It was so dreadful to behold to the point where the young boy collapsed onto his knees and wept, missing his allies ever so dearly.

An abrupt chill was felt on his shoulder, traveling up his spinal cord. Tails flinched and let out a gasp, eyeballs widened as a breeze had brushed past his right ear.

Hastily he stood back up, quickly wiping away his tears. Something was most certainly keeping an eye on the fox's every move. Could it have been one of the souls of those who were deceased? There was no telling for sure- especially since a majority of the beings here in this world were beyond malevolent in nature- but whatever the case might have been, Tails promptly continued forward to avoid any negative spiritual encounters. After all, that was the absolute last thing he needed tonight.

The wind howled as Miles propelled himself through the night. His eyes scanned the world below, and widened with surprise at what they found: sickening claws and featureless heads lifted up from the ground before their respective tombstones. Upon crawling up from the surface below, the undead monsters were soon revealed to be, in fact, the long lost friends he recently grieved over. Roars and growls filled the foggy air, causing the poor fox's ears to twitch. It was then that something had swooped down, aiming straight for him. A quick flash- through the foggy ambiance, a shrouded figure with large wings slammed into the fox before he had any time to react and move out of the way.

The unknown being gripped firmly onto him with something razor-sharp, inflicting nasty gashes along Miles' arms. Loud screeching filled the boy's ears; when he finally had a chance to open his eyes, he found that it was none other than Rouge the Bat. The bottom half of her figure was completely missing, appearing as if torn off; her skin was a sickly green, and her arms were replaced, up to her shoulders, with avian-esque talons. The Prower let out a shriek, struggling to pry her deadly claws off of his flesh and lacerations. As soon as she was forcefully removed from him, the child's tails gave out, as he had been flying for too long- his body could not give out any more. And so he fell, ripping through the thin layers of air as he headed straight down into the middle of a horde of the undead.

Following the scent of a living being, the zombified exes began to attack the little fox. As hard as each blow was, however, Tails noticed that none of the slaves seemed completely willing to do so; each and every one carried a painfully reluctant expression on their faces. If that was the case, then why were they mauling him? The poor boy couldn't think at all- everything he felt was pain and only pain. Another scratch, another punch, another kick to

the abdomen. It wasn't until the wrench in his hand was knocked away that Tails had completely given up; it soared for a moment before it skidded away on the ashy surface of the ground, completely out of his reach.

He laid upon the gravelly dirt, limp and helpless, taking numerous hits all over his feeble figure. Blood seeped out from the corner of his mouth as beads of sweat poured down his forehead. The swift crunching sound of being jabbed, along with the crowded wheezing, gurgling, and moaning, was beating harshly at the fox's eardrums. He had failed his friend; and with that in mind, he had thrown in the towel, patiently awaiting his death.

"Tails ... !" a well-known voice called out. *"Tails, buddy, are you there?"*

"Wh- ..." the two-tailed boy's eyes opened slightly; all he could see was white. The pain of being thrashed around like a ragdoll had strangely subsided.

"... S-Sonic?"

A light chuckle followed the child's confusion.

"Ah, there you are. Just droppin' by to let you know that you've got this! I owe you one, you know?"

"N-no, y-you don't owe me anything!" Replied the boy. "I just want you to be safe."

"I am safe, Tails! I promise."

Miles was silent for a moment. Words would not form- he wanted to see his friend face-to-face; he had so much to say- but alas, nothing came out.

And then, he woke up.

A sudden surge of energy coursed through the veins of the little fox. He stood back onto his feet and shoved the undead away, whipping them with his tails and knocking them down with tight fists. He struck back ferociously; each blow was stronger than the last, resulting in explosions of rotten flesh and raw bone. Pure carnage lay about as Tails finished off the last of the undead beasts ... but then came the instant thunder and lightning clash of regret. What had he done? The fox had pieced apart former individuals which he once called his allies, causing him to weep once again.

But what was this? When Tails wiped his tears, his blurry vision cleared; there was the sight of one last slave. It carried in its mouth his wrench, and was crawling away on all fours with a staggering limp.

The creature was identical to Sonic.

Those familiar quills shivered in the cold, brisk wind; soft groans of agony drifted helplessly without a savior to their name. Tails was absolutely horrified- could this have really been his best friend? No, no- *impossible.*

The fox was teary-eyed and shaky. His both legs nearly gave out at the sight- by God, he didn't care for the blasted wrench anymore- he simply wanted his best friend back.

A trembling hand reached out to caress the coarse fur of the half-dead hedgehog. Wetness dripped from Miles' sky blue eyes, a ghastly shriek slipping from him when the abhorrent creature reacted violently, aiming to bite the child's gloved palm. A gargled hiss left the monster's lips as the fox immediately backed off. But when Tails saw the other shake himself off like a filthy mutt, he found that they were covered from head to toe in dust and dirt. Underneath the layer of grime was an olive green hue, which led the two-tailed hero to realize that this was, in fact, not his missing ally- but his counterpart, Scourge the Hedgehog. The poor child was still quite horrified; however, he also felt relieved that it wasn't Sonic who faced a fate such as this. He did have to admit, though, that he was indeed confused over why Scourge attempted to steal his wrench- and there was no way he was getting it back now. He wouldn't even dare try to pry it away from that *thing.* The only option left was to keep going without it.

When the night was about halfway over, a loud, unsettling rumble interrupted the fox's path. A tombstone significantly taller than the rest had erected from the grainy terrain of the graveyard. Emerging from the grave and through the ghastly fog was a relatively short figure, almost Miles' height. Their footsteps were rhythmic, chafing against the rubble below, and a mysterious gleam could be spotted flickering whenever hit by the bright moonlight.

There stood Cream the Rabbit, albeit atrociously transformed. Her entire face was split open- torn skin and muscle- revealing only her fractured skull. Her clothing was nearly shredded, coated in black grime. On the top of her head was an orange hair tie, supporting her 'ears,' which were, in fact, enormous blades hanging from thick antennae. What

happened to the Cream who Tails knew and loved? The fox found himself frozen- *petrified*- unable to move in the presence of the satanic bunny. “C-Cream? Is that you ...?”

There was only silence. Her eyeless gaze saw through the boy’s very soul, causing him to shudder.

“Mister Tails,” spoke the rabbit in her high-pitched voice, “it isn’t nice of you to wake up the slaves. I’m afraid I will have to end you now!” Cream approached with threatening steps; each time her feet lowered onto the ground, a ‘boom’ would ensue, shattering the silence. Miles began to walk backwards, stepping away from her nervously. But the attempt was ineffectual- promptly did she swing her head, causing her blade-ears to slash at the fox. Thankfully she had missed; otherwise, he would have ended up as chopped liver. Tails rolled out of the way at the very last second, dodging the huge knives, before having to jump over them, as Cream had swung again. And again. And again. Now her ‘ears’ rotated like speeding wheels on either side of her head.

The little bunny ran towards her target with an unyielding velocity.

With a bloodcurdling scream, Miles immediately sped away from his potential killer. She was soon gaining up on him, however, causing the boy to panic heavily. Breathing became difficult; a strong burn began to flourish in his calves. He was running out of energy quickly- great, this was *exactly* what he needed. But then, that was when he spotted the thing that would save his life: a thick, sturdy tree.

The little boy thankfully gained enough speed to run up the tree at a ninety-degree angle, despite how tired he was becoming. When Cream pursued hot on the trail and reached where her prey was, the fox leaped backwards in a fantastic flip, stepping on her head as soon as he landed. The rabbit’s focus was too much for her own good; her rapidly-spinning blades made an attempt to slice the fox pup into hundreds of pieces, moving towards the center of her head. Before they could reach him, he leaped high into the air and watched as the rabbit was unable to stop the inertia of her weapons, screaming in torment as the enormous knives carved deep into and through her skull. Her body collapsed backwards into two pieces, completely limp and devoid of life as a puddle of jet-black oil spread out, instantly killing the patches of grass growing from the grey soil. Tails had no time to grieve- he needed to leave the area as soon as he possibly could, before anything else would threaten to get in his way here.

[SLAVELANDS]

Once the sun arose, one could clearly sight the absolutely desolate and miserable landscape ahead. The grass was dead and dry as hay; each slave walking upon it could be seen breaking their backs trying to construct things out of the same ‘bricks’ in which Tails hid behind as of the previous day. These mangled workers were different than the ones he had seen when initially arriving to the inexplicably awful universe: machinery was attached to them, whether it be separately or as a limb replacement, which allowed them to get their work done with some ease. Cranes, engines, gears and cranks; the list was virtually endless as each individual strained to build upwards using their bizarre, partially artificial and constantly painful anatomy. Billows of smoke would arise, filling the sky with its dreadful pollution.

Now everything clicked together- the reason as to why these poor Mobians were transformed into these horrors was so they could function in a way without being strong enough to attack the ruler, whoever they were. Perhaps the others in the dying prairies were rejects, as it was seen that none of them could even remotely function. On occasion, some of the slaves in this location would also fight one another; could that be the reason as to why Scourge stole his wrench - as a means of self-defense? There were still so many unanswered inquiries to solve, and it was all so much for the little boy to comprehend and cope with.

Some questions did, however, find an answer to accompany them. A peculiar mechanism was soon spotted lying helplessly on the soft soil; upon further inspection, the little fox discovered that, on the very top of the device, was the signature emblem of Dr. Robotnik’s face. Several feet away from the piece of machinery was, oddly enough, a human arm sticking up from the ground. What was this doing here? Miles’ curiosity was piqued as he began to dig around the exposed flesh, uncovering more and more with each scrape of dirt. Eventually the body of the mad scientist was completely revealed- and he was not entirely deceased. It would seem his body had been left there to rot underneath the ground. But with a shaky breath, Ivo beckoned for the other to come closer. Upon doing so, Tails was pulled even nearer, to where his nose nearly touched the other’s. “Tails...” the evil man muttered with a quiver in his tone,

seeming as if he was about to cry. “Stay away from her. Whatever you do, find a way out of this hell *as quickly as you can.”*

Before Tails could even think to interrogate his enemy, Robotnik fell back, completely limp from dehydration. There was no source of water nearby; the fox made a strenuous attempt to revive the man, but alas, his effort was fruitless.

Ivo was dead.

Respectfully, Tails gently passed a hand down the doctor’s eyelids, closing them shut. He whispered to the man, “Rest in peace. You will be missed.” All of the hardships brought by Ivo was actually beneficial, as it brought Tails and his friends closer with each mission. And now the doctor was completely gone.

The fox continued onwards, watching his surroundings with pure dejection in his eyes. His thoughts were slow and silent, the gears of his mind rotating arduously due to the rust of misery coating their edges. Both legs dragged along with an intense heaviness, feeling as if cinder blocks were strapped down to his feet. An incredible hunger fit caused Miles’ stomach to grumble and roar; he hadn’t eaten anything in a full day- not since yesterday morning before going to see Sonic.

That was when desperation began to kick in the moment he spotted a lifeless slave’s body lying before him. Their midsection was completely torn open, exposing their intestines and other various internal organs. The sight was truly unbecoming, although the fox could see no other significant food source around. Did the slaves even eat? Most likely not, as their bodies were practically shriveled up, but they left enough meat so the fox could probably ... Oh, oh *God.* Now the hunger was talking, making Tails think in a manner in which he never would usually. But survival was survival, and the Prower needed to keep going. With that in mind, the little boy dug his gloved hands into the creature’s gaping wound, fingers grasping onto the slippery pink flesh. Thankfully this slave was not fully mechanical; they had blood instead of oil, which made them edible. He slowly yanked on the large intestine, bringing the fat, grey tube up to his lips. Sharp canines plunged into it as Tails took a very hesitant bite. The taste was less than desireable, but it was something, which was better than nothing.

The fox spent at least an hour carving away at the dead body, filling his empty stomach as best he could. Technically he was a predator, so he would have no issues digesting the organs, but the feeling of warm crimson staining his cloth gloves caused the little boy to bawl his eyes out. What had he become- A cannibal of sorts? There was no telling who this being once was,

but whatever the case might have been, they became Miles' lunch. He shivered and hugged himself, rocking back and forth as he sobbed with immediate regret. The boy then lowered onto his side, wrapping his two tails around his body like a blanket.

He cried himself to sleep.

[THE CASTLE]

Within the dark Queen's slowly-crumbling acropolis was a most chaotic scene. Miscellaneous objects were being thrown from across the room; more specifically, Sonic.exe's belongings. The chipmunk hinted out his scent and promptly discarded whatever it infested. She wanted nothing to do with him- he was physically gone, and so his precious artifacts would suffer the same fate. Those various items crashed against the stone wall upon impact and exploded into thousands of pieces, creating a mess of powdery dust and shards. The slaves that were forced to guard the interior of the castle cowered from their highness' fury. Never had they seen her so irate; with Sonic.exe around, she was seen as the obedient and docile trophy-wife. Little did they know that her patience, over time, was running thin- the rage within her boiled, and finally erupted like a tea kettle. Animalistic growls and grunts could be heard from Sally's personal quarters as she continued to empty out the room of her late ex-lover's things. It wasn't long before the sounds of heavy items being smashed to bits could be heard.

By the time Sally was finished, her breath was heavy and the room was an absolute mess. She would deal with that later. For now, the Queen would allow herself to relax after that massive outburst, as a splitting headache began to form in the back of her skull. "That vile being," she spat, before kicking at some of the dust on the ground, scattering it everywhere. A swift turnaround followed as she faced some of the slaves; a snarl painted across her face as she shouted, "WHAT?" They immediately skittered off, and the chipmunk huffed and puffed. But that was when a lanky figure limped into the room- another slave, though this one was much different than the rest. With a multitude of eyeballs placed all over its fragile body, this slave had the power to see what others could not: it could visualize what was going on in all places of Mobius_ALT, at all times. It was more of a curse than a gift, as the creature could no longer sleep, but it was treated with far more kindness, as it was the Queen's royal 'set of eyes'.

“Your highness,” it began with a raspy and heavily strained breath, “there is an intruder among us.”

What started to form as a small smile once the seer made its way into the room, immediately dropped into a deep frown. “... *Excuse* me?”

Nervously did the gangly, all-beholding exe cringe, tucking its head back some. “Th-there is an intruder, my Queen. A yellow fox, so it appears. He is in the Slavelands as we speak.”

“My slaves are as incompetent as the late king himself. What *pitiful* excuses!” Her voice raised with growing anger, causing the seer to screech softly, black smoke billowing from its mouth.

“Tails is his name- or, rather, his nickname,” explained the Queen. “He is most definitely looking for his precious friend.” That was when a grin spread across Sally’s countenance, stretching from ear to ear. She continued, “No need to worry. By the time he arrives here, I shall have something special in store for him. Let us think of it as a bit of a ‘celebration’ of his presence.”

The seer nodded in response. “Y-yes, my Queen.” It slithered away as the chipmunk began to cackle wickedly to herself. She ever so eagerly anticipated Tails’ arrival, rubbing her claws together as the gears of her mind spun. She made her way downstairs and towards her underground dungeon, where many innocent Mobians were being held captive. One particular cell held the blue blur himself. He was restrained in tight chains, having both wrists cuffed together behind his back. A tape gag was placed over Sonic’s mouth, and his body shuddered with fear as the dastardly Sally_ALT sauntered over in his direction.

“Well, well, well,” she taunted, “what do we have here?”

Sonic responded with several muffled whimpers.

“Oh, don't look so *blue*.” The chipmunk laughed at her own dark joke, letting a single claw squish his cheeks together. As she held onto his face by his chin, the Queen tilted her head and let out a slow hiss as she inspected his scent. How incredibly foul- the odor was identical to that of Sonic.exe, minus the metallic aroma of blood. Sally then smiled at the hedgehog in a most sinister manner, and softly whispered to him, “I know *exactly* what to do with useless things such as yourself.”

[UNCONTROLLED FURY]

Miles was awoken by the clanking and clinking sound of chains and heavy footsteps, likely made by thick boots. Opening his groggy eyes, the fox turned his head, only to see reddish-grey colored legs at a very odd angle. “HEY,” shouted a deep, somewhat familiar voice. “WAKE UP.” Tails fearfully did as he was commanded, sitting up immediately. What he saw before his very eyes was a pure terror: his friend, Knuckles the Echidna, wholly transformed into an unspeakably vile beast. His hands were gone; they were replaced with sizeable metal fists containing a long spike on each knuckle, which were attached by chains that were wrapped around his upper torso. Where his eyes would be was an empty space- they must have been gouged out somehow- and the edges were lined with jagged teeth. However, where his real mouth would be, there was none. There was also a large tube connected to his spine. Tails wondered what it was for.

He was well aware that this *was* his friend. For weeks had his allies been missing back in his own universe. The reason for him visiting Sonic in the first place was to ask if they were all on some sort of mission to locate Robotnik; but alas, his question had been answered the hard way: They were all stolen from him, one by one, and this is what they had become.

As the echidna spoke, the artificial jaws moved, growling with a harsh undertone, “GET BACK TO WORK, YOU PUTRID RAT.” His veins bulged and pulsated fiercely through his flesh, teeth gnashing and grinding with an unspeakable rage.

The crimson brute’s clearly evident blindness prohibited him from seeing that this was, in fact, Tails, and not one of the other slaves. That was when the fox noticed he must have been some sort of commander for the workers. This caused him to let out an anxious chuckle as he would raise his palms, shaking his head. “Y-You don’t understand, I-”

“TALKING BACK, ARE WE?” shouted Knuckles, with his face growing dark. How strange; his blood must have been oil as well, considering he would normally be turning red. Perhaps that was what ran through the tube along his back, as a soft humming noise emitted from it while it vibrated. “N-no! Not at all!” replied the little boy. He shuffled backwards and tripped on a sizeable pebble, collapsing onto the ground. The echidna towered above him- both fists clashed with each other, displaying his dominance- he intended to intimidate the Prower.

“YOU’VE GOT SOME NERVE, *WORM*.”

With that, Knuckles prepared himself to punch the ground. Miles quickly leapt out of the way at the last second; the earth cracked as rocky debris shot upwards. He surely would have died in that instant had he not eluded the attack. “Knuckles, please, stop!” cried the little fox pup. But the malformed echidna did not listen- instead, he grappled the boy he once called a pal, tossing him up into the air with a killer uppercut before landing a powerful roundhouse kick to his stomach. Tails flew back from the great impact and crashed onto the ground with a sickening thud, nearly fracturing his left arm from the position in which he landed. A pained yelp slipped from his lungs.

“Kn... Knuckles!” The boy groaned and began to weep from the sheer pain he was in. Before he could get up, the maroon echidna stormed his way over and threateningly ‘stared’ down at Miles. The fox’s breath sped up as his anxiety level increased tenfold; with a blubbering voice, he then begged, “P-please don't do th-this!”

For a fraction of a second, Knuckles snapped out of his daze, as if the sound of his friend’s absolutely terrified voice had reached out to him. The pain of his grotesque transformation had finally caught up with the Echidna as he doubled over, clutching onto his abdomen. Both metal hands then raised up to cover his ‘eyes’. Fear washed over the poor exe while he trembled vigorously, his mouth substitute speaking in a hoarse voice, “T-Tails... It hurts...!” Knuckles soon began ‘crying’. The oral cavity which made up for his lack of scleras and violet irises drooled a viscous black liquid- some of which dripped onto the fox below- and in response, Tails could only muster an aghast facial expression. His mind was totally blank on how to comfort his red companion. He crawled backwards, a good distance away from his friend, as soon as he noticed the other fighting something back. Whatever challenged Knuckles was obviously winning; the echidna groaned in agony and twitched violently- and after a moment, the hostile behavior returned. “I'LL TURN YOU INTO *MINCEMEAT!”* he roared, and Miles promptly stood and ran the hell away.

The fox raced as fast as his little legs could take him, letting his both tails propel him forward for extra speed. The echidna followed closely behind. He tore up every obstacle in his way while Miles dodged them all to the best of his ability. He could hear bone-chilling crunches of the bark of dead trees crumbling in Knuckles’ grasp, as well as the explosions of dense rock succumbing to the mighty exe’s power. It wasn't long before Tails began to approach a large castle, which just so happened to be Sally’s domain, and he could see that some slaves were taking their leave from the building. The entrance to the castle was a vertical-lifting, solid stone gate, which was in the process of slowly closing. The gate progressively lowered as the fox

approached; Tails wasn't sure if he was going to make it safely inside. Knuckles was gradually catching up by the second.

He was just feet away from shelter; not far from the possibility of finally being safe. The little fox took a split second to judge his timing- and when Tails was close enough, he immediately leaped forward and slid, letting his body glide upon the semi-rocky ground. A particularly large cloud of dust trailed behind him, and Knuckles found himself in a violent coughing fit when coming into contact with it. Miles' timing was spot-on; the gate closed all the way, right when he finished entering the dilapidated building.

[GODFORBIDDEN]

Despite the miserable outer appearance of the architecture, its interior was truly to die for: The walls were covered in the purest gold; umber coloured, hand-painted ornate patterns lined every corner. Polished, glistening tiles made up the floor, its deep mahogany hue complementing the rest of the astoundingly gorgeous decor. All the windows were made of stained glass- the imagery on them depicted the former leader and his ex-lover as if they were gods. This was certainly something royal... something almost disgustingly holy. Although, at the same time, there was a rather twisted aura to this place. It would seem that, regardless of the outer building remaining analogous to its surroundings, its inner mien was the exact polar opposite. The piercing silence was enough to creep up the fox's spine as he made his way through this deceivingly enchanted corridor.

Each footstep carried an echo throughout the hall, and Tails' reflection in the glossy tiling below seemed to morph and shift its shape just a bit with each blink of his eyes. Not another monster was in sight, thankfully, although he would have to mentally knock on wood for thinking that, as to not jinx the situation at hand.

Eventually the fox made a wrong turn and came to a dead end. The scenery had drastically changed; now, the walls were metallic, rusted, and full of scratches. There was no turning back now, because as soon as Tails turned to face where he had come from... he was met with a solid wall. When he turned around again, his body was petrified, and both eyes were glued to what stood before him: A face, the size of a door. But this face was built in the likeness of his own; a hopeless, melancholic expression was painted upon it. It was as if this upscaled replica was alive, as it silently stared down at the fox with empty eye sockets. What other strange horrors thrived beyond this place? As Tails approached this peculiar visage, its 'mouth' let out a soundless scream, displaying to him an entrance. An eternal cry of agony was now carved into the countenance of this door, causing Tails to grimace as he hesitantly stepped through.

Inside the room was a completely different location than where Tails had just been. This was no longer the castle, but instead some strange dungeon. Why did the castle lead him here? Certainly this did not make any sense. Anyone else wandering through would probably not have to pass by here, no; it was as if the building itself was alive, and damned him here for trespassing. After all, that would explain the sudden appearance of the metal wall which prevented him from going back outside. With a loud slam, the door behind Miles was shut. The face which surrounded the door was still his own- though now, its features were abhorrent: it looked as though someone had repeatedly smashed a hammer into it, and half of the visage was missing, revealing a piece of the skull underneath. The little Prower did his best not to stare for too long, for his psyche was already beyond damaged from all he had previously endured.

Inside the dungeon could be heard the disturbing sounds of pained groaning, hoarse pleads for help, choked sobbing, and the occasional wail of anguish. Tails' breathing was getting short and raspy from the sudden spike of his nerves. He could smell the scent of rotting corpses, with its foul and bitter odor wafting throughout the area. The ugly yellow tint from the dying, constantly-flickering lightbulbs barely provided any adequate illumination to begin with- it was hard enough as it was to try and navigate through this nauseating place which seemed even worse than Tartarus itself, but with the shadows morphing into bizarre figures whenever the lights came back on, it only made the journey ten times more arduous and horrifying. Tails could have sworn he saw the hides of his friends hanging limply on metal hooks. There was no telling from the darkness which obscured most of the area, but there was a good chance his prediction was correct. He could feel his soles step in small piles of internal organs, splattered puddles of dark crimson... the fox even noticed a full, decapitated head, having once belonged to Charmy the Bee.

Miles nearly stumbled over when he discovered a spiral staircase deep in the bowels of the dungeon. He was indeed hesitant to pursue wherever it lead to, but of course, there was no other choice regarding which way to go- the door that was encompassed by his own face was still shut and practically impossible to open. The little Prower braced himself as he continued forth, taking one step after the other. It was a steep flight; however, he soon made it to the end. The top floor of the castle followed all those steps; the scarlet hues of the bleak sky had actually, surprisingly, brought Tails some sort of hope. Being anywhere else other than this horrendous prison and torture chamber was beyond ideal. A smile appeared on the child's visage as he approached the outside world... but it quickly fell once he noticed a tall, ominous figure in the shadows. It was leaning upon the edge of the tower, simply observing the land below as the wind brushed past without a care. Something dropped in Tails' gut as he stepped closer to this individual. He did not like the feeling- not one bit.

Before he could even open his mouth to speak, the other interrupted his forming thoughts. *"Hello there, little one."* A feminine, albeit nefarious tone slithered into the fox's large ears, causing his every muscle to tense up while his bones felt a disturbing chill. When the being's silhouette turned around to face him, the shape was akin to that of his friend, Sonic. But Sonic did not have this voice, so what exactly was going on here? Miles squinted his ice blue eyes and demanded, "Come into the light." A chuckle ensued from the unknown entity; with that, they stepped towards where the sun shone. What was revealed caused Tails so gasp- he stood for a moment, before feeling his body lose control. He sunk to the ground and clenched his teeth, trying his hardest not to reduce himself into a puddle of tears. Both hands were balled into tight fists as his nose scrunched, wetness already slipping from the corners of his eyes.

What stood before the fox was Sally_ALT, dressed in a coat made up from his friend's pelt.

Tails had failed his mission. All of his hard work and strenuous efforts to continue through this hellish, unforgiving landscape had gone to waste. Sonic was dead. His other friends were dead. Even his nemesis was dead. There was nobody; he was all alone in this pit of disarray and despair.

It was safe to say that Sonic really was safe- he was no longer suffering, but instead venturing in the afterlife like the free spirit he always was.

"You... y-you *bitch!* You're not my Aunt Sally!*"* The boy felt his fingers curling deeper into his palms, his hands trembling as the tears began to flow down his cheeks. It would seem Sally took a liking to his anguish, as a satisfied, rattlesnake-like hiss emitted from her throat. An unruly grin stretched across her bloodied countenance in response to the young Prower's suffering. Tails was positively broken now; his breathing became hysteric and raspy, and he felt as if he would pass out at any given moment. But he also acknowledged that if he were to give up now... if he were to let this ungodly version of Sally Acorn bask any further in her glory... there was no telling what else she would do to other universes out there. When Sally removed the skinned robe from her curvaceous form and let it fall onto the ground before the very fox's eyes, Tails realized one thing: He had to fight back. He had to *win.*

The boy leaped up onto his feet and darted straight for the chipmunk, letting out an enraged roar. All the fury that was bottled up inside Tails had finally exploded. He was going to make this Sally pay for all that she'd done- she would pay for hurting and killing his friends, and she would pay for destroying the lives of all these innocent individuals. The boy readied a powerful punch, and managed to land a blow right in her face, although he halted in his tracks in the exact moment the queen decided to retaliate: Her jaws opened, and continued opening past

the point of dislocation. Gut-wrenching crackles could be heard as the muscles making up her face could be seen through her still-opening muzzle. It was as if her outer face and inner face were separate; the chipmunk gave a violent growl, her body hunching in an aggressive stance.

Despite how terrified Miles must have been, he decided to take advantage of the situation by springing into the air, letting his thick tails whack the megalomaniac queen with a swift twirl. She stumbled back, completely off balance, but quickly recovered by contorting her body backwards, letting her claws rest upon the solid stone floor. Now, Sally was irritated. She wanted desperately to tear this weakling in half; she wanted to hear his tiny frame drain itself of his blood, as well as the squishing noises of his vital organs seeping out from countless gashes, splattering onto the ground below. But, of course, the chipmunk had a much bigger goal to accomplish- she would merely abandon the fox and leave him here to rot.

[YOUR FAULT]

A portal then manifested itself into view once the wretched queen lifted a claw up high in the air. As Sally leaped backwards into it, her face returned to normal and the surrounding world began to envelop itself in binary code. Numerous zeroes and ones ate away at the universe around the two, a pitch-black darkness consuming the land like a shredder eating away at a sheet of paper. But right before Sally_ALT was completely engulfed by the portal, Tails reacted lightning quick, vaulting right towards her and pushing both the queen and himself in the vortex with a strong kick. It felt as if he were swimming in ink; the fox could not see a damn thing, but he was suddenly spit out onto asphalt, tumbling over and nearly scraping his elbows. It took a moment for Miles to recompose himself... but when he glanced up, what he saw was truly chaotic. Another vortex had opened; this one was spilling out slaves, pouring them out like liquid. Each one rampaged throughout the city- they flipped over vehicles, terrorized pedestrians, and some even climbed buildings, breaking windows to make their way inside.

This was certainly too much for Tails to handle right now. He would have to tackle the source of the problem, which was none other than Sally herself. Eventually the boy caught sight of the chipmunk making her way towards what seemed like a research facility; the lofty, pearl-white building stood behind a dome-like structure, which carried a particularly large satellite system. Tails did his very best to catch up with the ruthless queen, flying in the air as fast as he could. He wasn’t as quick as he normally would be, however, due to the fact that his whole body was becoming sore from all it withstood.

But he had to stop. Sally dove headfirst into a third vortex she created within an instant, leaving nothing behind except for her hench-creatures. There was no telling where she had gone;

Miles could not spot the queen anywhere. That was when the countless monitors placed throughout town, in a fashion similar to New York's Time Square, shut down, and came back on only to broadcast Sally_ALT's gruesome visage for the world to see. She had gone fully digital. How was this possible? She had literally just transcended from the third dimension into the second within the blink of an eye. Tails stood there, positively dumbfounded, as the absolute havoc continued behind him in all corners.

"You must be quivering in your sneakers, aren't you?" inquired the queen, showing off a horrendous smile. "Excellent- you should be. Because this world, it is mine now. It is *all* mine to conquer. Soon I will have full control of the townsfolk, those in the rest of this planet, and I will eradicate Mobius from its disgraceful existence!"

While the potential ruler let out a disgusting laugh, echoing throughout all the screens which displayed her abhorrent visage, Tails sped to the research facility. Inside there was a multitude of deceased bodies; each computer was blue-screened and preoccupied with feeding the nearby supercomputer with decades worth of information. All of the documents contained data regarding alternate universes, as well as the mathematics behind them. There were even documents located that were once written by the nefarious Doctor Robotnik, which contained coordinates of the locations of his devices and the dimensions they were in. The little fox had to put a stop to this hell as quickly as he could- or else, this would surely lead to imminent doom. He would need to cut the electricity from the whole research facility in order to cease the distribution of information, as well as prevent Sally from overpowering the rest of the digital realm. So with that in mind, Tails raced to the supercomputer and but his brains to good use.

Lines of code were frantically typed once the command prompt was opened. Those lines soon became paragraphs- the fox was making an attempt to cause the supercomputer to contradict its own commands, eventually leading to a permanent erasure of all files and a shutdown in addition. Time was ticking, people were dying, and Tails felt his heart slamming repeatedly against his ribcage. Soon the boy had managed to complete his task- after hitting the enter key one last time, the supercomputer flashed an error message before the screen went completely blank. In that instant, all the documents were erased, and there was no more information leaking from the smaller computers into this one. Sally_ALT had been eradicated.

Or was that really the truth?

When Miles exited the building, he noticed there was not a single slave in sight. How peculiar... they just disappeared out of nowhere? The entire city suddenly underwent a massive power outage before the fox could even think to make a comment to himself. Now all the surroundings

were dark and dreadful; the only light source was the still-setting sun, which provided a gloomy, red-violet hue in the evening sky. There was only one explanation for this: Sally was still active and under control.